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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 001424

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DEPT FOR EUR - DAS BRYZA AND EUR/CARC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/11/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: PUSHING ARMENIA TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST KONGRA GEL

Classified By: CDA A.F.Godfrey for reason 1.4 (b,d)

Summary

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11. (S) The Government of Armenia has taken little action to respond to USG requests to address concerns about the possible presence and activity of Kongra Gel in Armenia. A recent high-level push by visiting DAS Matt Bryza got a more positive response, but it is too soon to tell if the GOAM will take action. While Armenia has a very small ethnic Kurd population, most who reside here permanently are non-Muslims and remained in Armenia through the years of active conflict with Azerbaijan. While we have seen increasing reports, including in the press, that the Kongra Gel has a presence here, we have not been able -- so far -- to get the local security services to focus resources to address this significant concern. End Summary.

MFA: This is an Intel Matter, Not a Policy Issue  
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12. (S) During a September 26 meeting with Deputy FM Arman Kirakossian and MFA international security department head Armen Yedigarian, CDA pressed for Armenia to take action to ensure that Kongra Gel did not have an opportunity to use Armenia either as a base of operations or as a transit point. Kirakossian questioned whether the KGK had any presence at all in Armenia. He said that Armenia does have a very small Yezidi population, and acknowledged that these people are ethnically Kurds, those who remained in Armenia during the war with Azerbaijan were not Muslim. (Note: According to the 2001 census, there are 40,621 Yezidis in Armenia. End Note.) Yedigarian was more resistant. He referred to previous attempts by the Embassy to engage the MFA and said that the answer both then and now is that this is a matter to raise with the intelligence service, not the foreign ministry.

13. (S) In a follow-up discussion, Yedigarian questioned the provenance of reporting which likely led us to suspect that there was an active presence of Kongra Gel in Armenia. He suggested that the source of our reports was Turkey, which could not be considered objective on issues relating to Armenia. But in addition to reporting from classified sources, one local press outlet reported openly on October 11 of a wedding in the Western Armenia region of Armavir which was supposedly attended by more than 300 Yezidi and also "members of the Kurdistan Committee including four members of the PKK from Turkey and Syria." One local academic expert on Kurds and Iran told us that "Kurdish political organizations" in Sweden and Iran are sending money to about 20 Armenian Yezidis (septel).

"No Official Position on KGK"  
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14. (S) When we attempted to gather information on the GOAM's anti-terrorism efforts in relation to the KGK in late May, we were referred to the MFA's Department of Arms Control and National Security. Armen Papikyan, the head of the department's Conventional Arms Control Division, told us the MFA was not involved in KGK issues, which were the purview of "law enforcement agencies." Papikyan also said that there was no evidence that the KGK was in Armenia and that the GOAM did not have an "official position" on the KGK.

Bryza Presses MFA for Action  
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15. (S) During an October 4 lunch with DFM Kirakossian, visiting DAS Matt Bryza pressed hard for Armenia to set aside its suspicions about the source of our concerns and to have the appropriate government body "look harder" for evidence of Kongra Gel activity in Armenia. Bryza told Kirakossian that while we could not share reports directly with the GOAM, he was ready to give assurances that there were serious allegations. We told Kirakossian that we had engaged with the GOAM through "other channels" but had been told that this was a "human rights issue" and should be raised with the MFA; the opposite response of that which we got from the MFA. We told Kirakossian that whether an intelligence, security or human rights issue, it required a policy decision to move forward.

Comment  
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16. (S) The increase in press reports should make it easier for us to get the GOAM to move beyond the "No PKK here"

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response. But it may take further high-level engagement to get them beyond a policy which seems to be based on the philosophy that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." We'll keep pushing.  
GODFREY